RECAP-25FA-FBC-RRIT-WK04-STUDENT

Student Recap, The Stones Cry Out - The Hermeneutic of Suspicion"

Class Details

Professor Imler
"The Stones Cry Out - The Hermeneutic of Suspicion"
Reading Responsibly in Translation at FBC
Week 04, 25_12_07, 25FA

Outline

1. **Schüssler Fiorenza's Reading Strategies** - Moving beyond "whatever the text says is truth" to liberatory methods
    1. **Hermeneutic of Experience** - Start with real lives and dignity, not abstract theology; ask "are you treated well as image of the divine?"
    2. **Multiple Feminist Approaches** - Different feminisms argue with themselves about what works; not monolithic
    3. **Standpoint Feminism** - **Marginalized people** know best what's wrong and have creative solutions already working
2. **Reading Behind the Scenes** - **Hermeneutic of Suspicion** asks what's hidden in texts
    1. **Greco-Roman Swoon Problem** - **Acts of Thecla** and **Acts of Thomas** show women converts as "erotically smitten," but this reveals language limitations not reality
    2. **Linguistic Constraints on Women's Agency** - Sympathetic authors tried to include women leaders but lacked vocabulary to describe women's rational religious choice
    3. **Hidden vs. Public Transcripts** - James C. Scott's framework: subordinate groups create protected spaces for authentic selves while **masking** in public
3. **Timeline Matters** - **Pre-70 vs. Post-70 Christianity** shows dramatic shift
    1. **40-70 CE Egalitarian Period** - Paul's authentic letters (Galatians: "no longer male no female"); participatory church without pastors
    2. **Post-70 Accommodation** - **Deutero-Pauline** letters (Timothy, Titus) and Peters introduce **household codes** borrowed from Roman **paterfamilias** system
    3. **Hebrews Exception** - Best Greek writing in New Testament, no author, possibly woman writer
4. **Roman Household Codes** - **Paterfamilias** had absolute authority over slaves, wife, clients, extended family
    1. **Property Logic From Slavery** - Roman slavery had no limits on owner; this total ownership model extended to all property concepts

2. **Reproductive Mandate** - Women needed to produce five children; sexuality tied to irrationality in Roman law
3. **Gender-Rationality Flip** - Roman law: women sexual/irrational, men rational; modern version flips but still unfair

5. **Archaeological Evidence** - Stone inscriptions and martyr accounts preserve women leaders despite textual erasure
    1. **Phoebe the Deacon** - Romans 16 lists her first; Paul uses **honor** rhetoric to elevate women's status
    2. **Sophia Inscription (375 CE)** - Jerusalem stone calls her "second Phoebe"; memory preserved 300+ years
    3. **Carthage Martyrs (180 CE)** - Perpetua, Felicitas, Donata, Secunda, Vestia; women teachers and leaders
    4. **Theodora (age 21)** - Best teacher of the law; "devoted to Holy Spirit alone"
6. **Tertullian's Backlash** - Church father says women can't speak, teach, or baptize
    1. **Anti-Thecla Campaign** - Complains Acts of Thecla shows women doing ministry
    2. **Montanists as Alternative** - Men and women co-equal; ongoing revelation; both genders prophesy
    3. **Recovery Challenge** - How do we recover erased voices when sources are tombstones and inscriptions?
7. **Contemporary Stakes** - Doug Wilson and local conservatives still replicate household code logic
    1. **Wrestling With Sacred Text** - If early egalitarian and later patriarchal both in Bible, what's our response?
    2. **Learning From Hidden Possibilities** - Early Christian experiments in equality worth studying

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Essential Terms

Term	Shorthand Definition
Hermeneutic of Experience	Reading method starting with real lives and dignity rather than abstract theology; asks if images of divine are treated well
Hermeneutic of Suspicion	Reading what's hidden behind the scenes in texts; questioning surface meanings to uncover patriarchal assumptions or erased voices
Standpoint Feminism	Method centering marginalized voices as having best knowledge of problems and solutions due to ground-level perspective
Kyriarchy	Patriarchy plus all other privilege types (race, class, etc.); who sits at top of intersecting hierarchies
Hidden Transcript	Authentic practices and beliefs subordinate groups maintain in protected spaces away from power's observation
Household Codes	Roman family structure rules borrowed into post-70 Christian texts; male head controls slaves, wife, clients, extended family
Paterfamilias	Roman male household head with absolute authority including life-death decisions; property-based human relationships

Term	Shorthand Definition
Deutero-Pauline	Letters with Paul's name (Timothy, Titus, some others) but different vocabulary and style; likely written by later authors
Pre-70 Christianity	Period 40-70 CE with egalitarian Pauline letters before temple destruction; more participatory church structures
Greco-Roman Swoon	Literary motif showing women converts as erotically obsessed; reveals linguistic limits not actual experience

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Key Questions

1. "How do we read texts through their own context rather than our 2025 perspective?" - *Student concern about reading 2,000-year-old texts; problem of underlying cultural codes we miss*
2. "Was there an assumption that Paul wrote everything attributed to him?" - *Discussion of Deutero-Pauline authorship; when later writers borrowed Paul's authority*
3. "How do you recover people who were rendered invisible?" - *Methodological challenge when sources are limited to tombstones and inscriptions; can't bribe women to write about themselves*

Major Sources

- Schüssler Fiorenza, Elisabeth: *Wisdom Ways* and *In Memory of Her*
- Scott, James C.: *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*
- Paul's Letters: Romans (especially ch. 16), Galatians, Thessalonians
- Deutero-Pauline Letters: Timothy, Titus, Peters
- Acts of Thecla
- Acts of Thomas
- Tertullian: Anti-women's ministry writings
- Carthaginian Martyr Acts (*Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis*)

Changelog

- 2025-12-07: Initial student handout created by LCARS